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WHERE'S HOME ALONE 2: LOST IN NEW YORK?
REEL GUYS TALK ABOUT THEIR FAVOURITE HOLIDAY MOVIES ... NOT ALL OF THEM ARE SO FEEL-GOOD PAGE 16

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NELSON MANDELA

Former South African president and Nobel Peace Prize winner Nelson Mandela at the Mandela Foundation in Johannesburg in 2005. The beloved statesman died Thursday at the age of 95. More coverage on pages 4 and 14. GIANLUIGI GUERCIA/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Anti-apartheid hero dies at 95. Loss of South Africa's 'greatest son' felt worldwide

Nelson Mandela was a master of forgiveness. South Africa's first black president spent nearly a third of his life as a prisoner of apartheid, the system of racist white rule, yet he sought to win over its defeated guardians in a relatively peaceful transition of power that inspired the world.

As head of state, the ex-boxer, lawyer and inmate lunched with the prosecutor who argued successfully for his incarceration, sang the apartheid-era Afrikaans anthem at his inauguration and travelled hundreds of miles to have tea with the widow of Hendrik Verwoerd, who was prime minister at the time he was sent to prison and the architect of white rule.

It was this generosity of spirit that made Mandela, who died on Thursday at the age of 95, a global symbol of sacrifice and reconciliation.

Dressed in black, South African President Jacob Zuma announced that Mandela died "peacefully" while with his family at around 8:50 p.m. local time on Thursday.

"We've lost our greatest son. Our nation has lost its greatest son. Our people have lost a father," Zuma said. "Although we knew that this day would come, nothing can diminish our sense of a profound and enduring loss."

South Africans are reacting to the death of Mandela, considered by many to be the father of the nation, with deep sadness. One Johannesburg resident, 31-year-old Hamsa Moosa, said he "wouldn't be free" if not for the man affectionately known by his clan name "Madiba."

In Canada Mandela is being remembered for his wisdom and devotion to fighting injustice.

"The world has lost one of its great moral leaders and statesmen," Prime Minister Stephen Harper said Thursday, describing the honorary Canadian citizen's forbearance as "legendary." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

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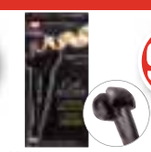

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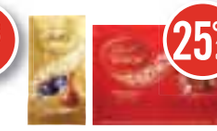

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SHOPPERS DRUG MART

PotashCorp cuts irk Wall

Reaction. Premier accuses company of sacrificing workers to protect shareholders

Premier Brad Wall addresses the media Thursday. He's written a letter to PotashCorp chairman Dallas Howe, decrying the company's decision to preserve dividend for shareholders while also laying off more than 1,000 workers.
SARAH TAGUIAM/METRO IN REGINA

Premier Brad Wall has sent a letter to Potash Corp. of Saskatchewan executives blasting them for cutting jobs while preserving the dividend paid to shareholders.

The company said Tuesday that it is laying off 1,045 people to reduce its workforce by about 18 per cent, with the biggest hits in its home province of Saskatchewan.

Wall is upset because PotashCorp CEO Bill Doyle said the fertilizer company's dividend is "sacrosanct" and won't be touched.

"This can only mean that the interests of shareholders were protected while the interests of employees here in Saskatchewan and elsewhere were sacrificed," Wall wrote in the letter dated Dec. 4.

About 440 people will lose their jobs in Saskatchewan. Most of those positions are at PotashCorp's Lanigan division, where one of two mills is to suspend production by the end of the year, and at its Cory division, where production will be reduced. Cuts will also be made at the Saskatoon headquarters.

About 130 people in New Brunswick also will be out of a job. The rest of the cuts are to occur outside Canada, including more than 435 in the United States.

But in a three-page letter to Wall dated Thursday, PotashCorp chairman Dallas Howe says the amount of the dividend would not change the number of job cuts.

"If we reduced our dividend to zero, we still need to right-size our operations in order to protect the long-term sustainability of our company — and all of the remaining jobs," he wrote.

PotashCorp says the decision stems from soft demand for potash and phosphates, two major types of crop fertilizer.

Wall said tough times shouldn't be shouldered by workers alone.

"For the company to make that announcement that they made and then for Mr. Doyle to indicate that the dividend policy is unchanged and 'sacrosanct,' that causes me great concern," the premier said Thursday.

In the letter to Howe, Wall asks the company to revisit its dividend policy and Tuesday's decision "with a view to considering whether the number of layoffs could be mitigated."

"Mr. Doyle has his shareholders. I have mine and they're the people of the province, who ... own the potash in the first place."

Howe wrote that the board of the corporation "wholeheartedly" agrees that everyone should share in the bad times as well as the good, and said shareholders have shared the burden in the 35 per cent drop in share values in recent weeks.

"I want to be clear that the dividend is not sacrosanct.... If the board felt that the dividend should be adjusted downward or eliminated, it would do so. However, even the total elimination of the dividend would have no influence on how many employees it takes to efficiently run our operation."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"All the stakeholders in the company should share in the down times — not just workers, not just subcontractors, but shareholders." Premier Brad Wall

Wrap-up

Legislature closes fall session

The fall sitting of the Saskatchewan legislature has wrapped up after the introduction of 34 pieces of legislation and much debate about health care and schools.

There was traffic-safety legislation, which includes tougher penalties for impaired driving, and changes to the essential-services labour law.

The government also announced plans during the fall sitting to build nine new joint-use schools through public-private partnerships.

But Premier Brad Wall jokes that people will probably remember the fall more for the Roughriders' Grey Cup victory than what happened in the legislature.

The legislative session will resume March 3.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Privacy

Changes urged after SGI snooping

Saskatchewan's privacy commissioner says the Ministry of Highways needs to take responsibility after a worker snooped on a driver.

Commissioner Gary Dickson was called after a traffic officer with the transport compliance branch had an incident with another driver in 2010. Dickson says in a report that the traffic officer wanted to know why the other driver was upset, so he looked up the driver's personal information on the Saskatchewan Government Insurance database.

The officer contacted the driver, and the driver then complained to SGI and the RCMP.

Dickson says officials took some steps, including restricting the worker's access to the SGI database, but says the ministry needs to do more to stop it from happening again.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Saskatchewan residents reflect on legacy of Nelson Mandela

As people around the world mourn the loss of Nelson Mandela, Metro hit the streets of the province's largest urban centres to find out how residents feel the anti-apartheid icon, Nobel Peace Prize recipient and former president of South Africa will be remembered.

SARAH TAGUIAM AND MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

Talia Clark, 32, painter, Saskatoon

"I really hope he's going to be remembered as an inspiration to all people. He was a completely warm caring heart. He judged everyone equally with an open mind and heart and believed in the goodness of all."

Mike Partridge, 60, retired, Regina

"He did a lot of good things for his own people, I really admire him for that. He fought a lot of things for a lot of people and for the poor. He really brought up equality and I hope that after his death, all the racism continues to stop."

Tressa Dent, 18, page, Saskatoon

"I think he was a strong supporter of the peaceful resolution of matters and I think he was inspiring to people all over the world ... and I hope people will continue to remember that."

Lidia Costa-Muresan, 32, university employee, Regina

"He was a champion and a fighter. It's a great loss for freedom and humanity. He really raised the bar for the leaders of tomorrow. His death might derail some of the peace in South Africa but we're definitely going to look at what's in their future."

Sayge Helgason, 17, student, Saskatoon

"Nelson Mandela was an incredible man who will leave a legacy that will be known worldwide forever. He worked hard, he never quit and he was just an incredible man. It's very sad to see him pass."

Kyle Cwynar, 23, assembler, Regina

"He was a good leader for the black people.... I think his work with equality will continue. Like with Martin Luther King, he's a good leader for black people and he stood his ground. "

Mark Lane, left, board chairman of the Friendship Inn and executive director, Lynda Brazeau, pose with some of the 500 donation tins be set out to collect funds for the organization's Fill the Plate campaign.

MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

Friendship Inn asks for a hand to keep feeding mouths in need

Largest free meal program can't keep up. Operating costs are on the rise as demand increases 40 per cent

With a substantial increase in daily operating costs, Saskatoon's Friendship Inn is looking for a helping hand with their Fill the Plate campaign.

Officials say costs at the Friendship Inn have ballooned from an average of roughly $1 million annually to $1.6 million in 2013-14.

Friendship Inn executive director, Lynda Brazeau, said the campaign is critical, as higher demand has put pressure on operations.

"We went from just under 500 people on our busiest day to averaging 900 to 1,000 people every single day," she said. "So our basic operations increased by 40 per cent . . . this campaign … will be huge for our overall operations."

Through the Fill the Plate campaign, the Friendship Inn is trying to raise a total of $350,000 in the month of December, but she says the campaign will continue beyond the end of the month to address the remainder of the roughly $600,000 deficit.

Despite the ambitious goal, Brazeau said she's confident Saskatonians will rise to the occasion.

"I've worked in human services and in charitable organizations for 30 years and I've never worked with a city that's more generous," she said, noting not everyone has benefited from Saskatchewan's economic growth.

"Many people have come here over the last few years to find jobs or maybe 'the dream' … and they get here and they find it's not quite what they thought it was going to be and as a result, they're kind of trapped."

The Friendship Inn, the city's largest free-meal program, says they have approximately 500 Fill the Plate collection tins, which will be distributed across the city with PotashCorp matching donations for the month of December up to $100,000.

MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

Deficit

With the amount of people visiting the Inn almost doubling, officials say costs have ballooned from roughly $1 million annually to $1.6 million in 2013-14.

- The Friendship Inn is trying to raise a total of $350,000 in the month of December.
- The campaign will continue beyond the end of the month to address the remainder of the roughly $600,000 deficit.

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An 'outright lie': Ford denies he offered $5K and a car for video

Wiretap revelations. Deputy Mayor Norm Kelly calls new allegations 'troubling'

Toronto Mayor Rob Ford uses a security guard as a shield amid a throng of media at Toronto City Hall on Thursday. CHRIS YOUNG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Allegations that Rob Ford offered purported gang members money and a car in exchange for a video are an "outright lie," the Toronto mayor said Thursday amid new questions about why police did not arrest him.

Speaking on an American radio station, the scandal-plagued mayor quickly tried to change the topic when asked about the latest claims against him.

"You can talk to my lawyers about it," Ford told The Sports Junkies, a morning show based in Washington, D.C.

"I'm here to talk football, guys. So if you want to talk football, talk football; but if you want to talk about other things, then unfortunately I'm going to have to let you go."

The latest allegations, which have not been proven in court, are contained in wiretap summaries put together as part of a guns and gangs investigation that were in a police document released Wednesday.

The intercepts reveal men talking with familiarity about the mayor, and suggest they had supplied him with drugs and plotted to blackmail him with photographs of him doing narcotics, police said.

Ford said nothing on arrival at city hall Thursday but Deputy Mayor Norm Kelly, who has taken on many of the mayor's responsibilities, said the latest allegations would not affect city business. Kelly did call allegations that Ford was consorting with drug traffickers and gang members troubling.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Councillors want answers

Why wasn't he arrested?

Deputy Mayor Norm Kelly has called allegations that Ford was consorting with drug traffickers and gang members troubling.

Some city councillors called on investigators to explain why they did not arrest the mayor, but police have consistently said they didn't have sufficient evidence to do so and Ford's status as mayor had nothing to do with it.

Investigators have asked to interview Ford, but he has refused on the advice of his lawyer, Dennis Morris, who called the latest allegations baseless.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Woman live-tweets her husband's fatal crash

A Washington state woman who regularly monitors police-scanner traffic unknowingly live-tweeted about her husband's death in a freeway crash.

In a series of gut-wrenching tweets on Wednesday, the Vancouver, Wash., mother first tweeted how horrible it was when she learned someone had died on Interstate 205 near the Oregon border.

Caran Johnson then told her Twitter followers that she was trying not to panic because her husband, who drives the freeway, wasn't picking up his phone and was late getting home.

"i'm a basketcase," she tweeted.

As the events unfolded, she messaged Washington State Patrol spokesman Will Finn directly, asking whether he had descriptions of the vehicles involved in the collision. Finn said he didn't, but it struck him as odd so he began looking into the crash.

"I contacted the investigator and we put two and two together. I realized I had a situation on my hands," Finn said Thursday.

Troopers later went to Johnson's home to tell her that her husband, 47-year-old Craig Johnson, had died in the collision. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Crews respond to an accident in Vancouver, Wash., Wednesday. Caran Johnson, who regularly monitors police-scanner traffic, unknowingly live-tweeted about her husband's death in the crash. ZACHARY KAUFMAN/THE COLUMBIAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Sex scandals. Pope sets up commission to advise church on child protection

Pope Francis responded Tuesday to complaints that he has largely ignored the clerical sex abuse scandal, agreeing to assemble a panel of experts to advise the Holy See on protecting children from pedophiles and helping abuse victims heal.

Cardinal Sean O'Malley, the archbishop of Boston, announced the creation of the commission Thursday at the conclusion of a meeting between Francis and his eight cardinal advisers who are helping him govern the church and reform the Vatican bureaucracy.

O'Malley told reporters that the commission, made up of international lay and religious experts on sexual abuse, would study current programs to protect children, better screen priests, train church personnel and suggest new initiatives for both the Holy See to implement inside the Vatican City State and for bishops to implement around the world.

SNAP, the main U.S. victim's group, dismissed the initiative as useless and said the only thing that will protect children is if the church punishes negligent bishops and orders them to publicly disclose the names of molesters. "This simple step would immediately make kids safer," said David Clohessy, SNAP director.

Advocates for victims have long denounced the Vatican's refusal to sanction bishops who shielded abusive priests. That practice, coupled with the church's culture of secrecy and fear of scandal, enabled pedophiles to continue molesting children for decades while the Vatican turned a blind eye.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Non-believers

"...parents and parishioners are being offered yet another toothless church panel."

David Clohessy, director of SNAP, the main U.S. victims' group

Lions, tigers and liligers!

Six-month-old liliger cub Eva plays in the snow with her mother, Zita, in a zoo in Novosibirsk, Russia, Thursday. The cub's mother is a liger — half-lioness, half-tiger — and her father is a lion, Sam.

ILNAR SALAKHIEV/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Legion of Christ. Former priest Williams marries the mother of his child

Thomas Williams, formerly the public face of the disgraced Legion of Christ religious order who left the priesthood after admitting he fathered a child, is getting married this weekend to the child's mother, The Associated Press has learned.

The bride is the daughter of former U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, Mary Ann Glendon, one of Pope Francis' top advisers. Elizabeth Lev, the bride, is a Rome-based art historian and columnist for the Legion-run Zenit news agency, which Williams published for over a decade while he was in the order.

Williams admitted last year that he had fathered a child several years earlier. At the time Williams was the most publicly prominent priest in the 950-strong order. He is the author of books such as 2008's Knowing Right From Wrong: A Christian Guide to Conscience, and was a commentator for the U.S. broadcaster CBS.

Williams apologized for "this grave transgression" against his vows of celibacy and said he had stayed on as a priest because he hoped to move beyond "this sin in my past" to do good work for the church.

Williams left the priesthood in May to care for his son. He and Lev are due to marry on Saturday in the United States.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

More to the story?

The wedding closes a circle of sorts, even as it raises some uncomfortable questions:

- Was Williams already in a relationship with Lev when she became a regular contributor to the magazine he published?
- Did family ties to Williams influence Glendon in her defence of the Legion and its disgraced founder despite credible reports that the founder was a pedophile?

Kenya

Venezuelan embassy diplomatic bag used to traffic drugs: Driver

Testifying Wednesday in the trial of a former diplomat charged in the killing of the acting Venezuelan ambassador, a driver at the embassy in Nairobi said the embassy's diplomatic bag was used to traffic drugs.

The embassy's former first secretary is charged with murder in the death of acting Ambassador Olga Fonseca, found strangled last year. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Eastern Europe

Moldova's official language changed

Moldova's Constitutional Court ruled Thursday that the country's official language should be changed to Romanian from Moldovan.

Moldovans and Romanians speak the same language with slight variations. The language was renamed Moldovan under Soviet rule to separate the country from Romania.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Boss. Born to Run original lyric sheet sells at Sotheby's for $197,000

A handwritten, working lyric sheet for Bruce Springsteen's 1975 hit Born to Run sold for $197,000 US on Thursday at Sotheby's.

The document used to be in the collection of Springsteen's former manager, Mike Appel, according to Sotheby's. It did not reveal the identity of either the seller or the buyer, a person bidding by telephone.

Most of the lines in this rough 1974 version, written in Long Branch, N.J., are apparently unpublished and unrecorded, but the manuscript does include "a nearly perfected chorus," the auction house said.

The title track of Springsteen's 1975 album has revved up generations of fans — some of whom still refer to themselves as "tramps," as in the song.

Springsteen is known to scrawl his songwriting stream-of-consciousness-style in notebooks. There are also some notes in the margins — "wild" and "angels" and a word that looks like "velocity," with the letter T in Springsteen's curlicue cursive.

"Although Springsteen is known to have an intensive drafting process, few manuscripts of Born to Run are available, with the present example being one of only two identified that include the most famous lines in the song," Sotheby's said.

The Born to Run manuscript was included in a sale of fine books and manuscripts. It had a pre-sale estimate of $70,000 to $100,000. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A page from the handwritten manuscript of Bruce Springsteen's 1975 hit Born to Run.

SOTHEBY'S/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Great suffering, enormous need

Ottawa nurse Janique Gagnon helps vaccinate a child in the Central African Republic. CONTRIBUTED

Médecins Sans Frontières. Conflict in the Central African Republic as awful as higher-profile crises, says Canadian nurse

DENIS ARMSTRONG
For Metro in Ottawa

Janique Gagnon returned from the Central African Republic on Oct. 8 "with a heavy heart."

The Ottawa children's hospital nurse had just spent the last six months on her first mission with Médecins Sans Frontières — Doctors Without Borders — in one of the most dangerous places on earth, and though she's glad to be home with her husband and two young sons, she wants to return to the war-torn nation as soon as possible.

Before nursing, Gagnon spent 10 years in the Canadian military, deployed in Italy as well as Bosnia-Herzegovina, where she treated casualties from Sarajevo while under fire. Gagnon retired from the military in 2001.

By then, she was looking for an opportunity to volunteer with MSF. The organization offered her the opportunity to run a 95-bed hospital in Boguila, Central African Republic — a jungle village 400 kilometres from the capital, Bangui. This was in April, only two weeks after a coup d'état reduced the tribal country to civil war.

Without blinking an eye, Gagnon accepted on the spot — nevermind that Seleka rebels and government forces fought viciously in the jungle near the hospital compound.

John Ging, the UN's director of humanitarian operations, has described the country as "a tinderbox that can ignite into something very, very big and very, very bad. Half the country's population of 4.6 million need humanitarian aid. The scale of suffering is among the worst in the world, and it's getting worse."

"I knew the conditions were bad, but that is why I wanted to be there, where the need is the greatest," said Gagnon.

Gagnon had arrived at the beginning of the rainy season when malaria was rampant. She treated the diseased, the dismembered and the dying, witnessing more human degradation than any person should ever see.

Thanks in part to her frontline military experience, she pushed through and focused on the job. She recalls the day she stood up to a Seleka colonel, ordering him to remove his gun prior to entering the hospital. She remembers the day she cried for the baby that died in her arms.

"Conditions were hard, but the people were so grateful we were there, they didn't want us to leave," she recalls. "I have a huge amount of respect for the people who live there. They have nothing. They can't even take care of themselves because there's nothing."

Gagnon says what they need most are schools. "Education leads to change. It's a long process, but it has to begin now."

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A woman and her dog are rescued by the RNLI, or Royal National Lifeboat Institute, from floods as heavy seas and high tides sweep across the country, in Rhyl, Wales, Thursday Dec. 5, 2013. PETER BYRNE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Deadly storm pounds Europe

Damaging winds.
Gusts up to 229 km/h slammed Scotland and paralyzed train service

Hurricane-force gusts hit Britain on Thursday as part of a powerful storm moving across Europe, disrupting air travel, halting trains and leaving tens of thousands of homes without electricity. Accidents linked to the storm killed three people.

Authorities evacuated some 10,000 homes along the eastern English coast after warning that the country could face its worst tidal surge in 60 years. The Thames Barrier — a series of huge metal plates that can be raised across the entire river — was being closed late Thursday to protect London from the surge.

Tidal floods — caused as the storm drives huge amounts of seawater toward the land — were expected in Britain, Germany and Scandinavia, together with freezing high winds from Greenland.

The storm plowed into Scotland overnight, slamming the highlands with gusts up to 142 miles (229 kilometres) per hour. Trains were suspended for much of the day, but began to run fitfully later as some routes were cleared of debris.

Rescue teams ferried residents to safety by boat in north Wales, while officials in other areas handed out sandbags and set up emergency shelters.

Transportation troubles were reported throughout northwestern Europe. All flights to and from Copenhagen's international airport were halted late Thursday due to the storm, officials said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taking cover

10,000

The amount of homes that have evacuated along the eastern English coast

Homicide charge. Deadly incident comes back to haunt Bollywood star

Indian movie star Salman Khan will face a fresh trial on a homicide charge for a fatal road accident more than 11 years ago.

Police said that Khan drove his car into a group of people sleeping on a Mumbai sidewalk in September 2002, killing one and injuring four.

The actor was on trial for a lesser offence of causing death by negligence, which carries a maximum penalty of two years in prison.

However, after a magistrate in Mumbai heard the evidence, he invoked the more serious charge of culpable homicide not amounting to murder against the actor in February.

Bollywood star Salman Khan
RAFIQ MAQBOOL/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Khan could face up to 10 years in prison if convicted of culpable homicide.

He also faces charges of negligent driving and causing grievous hurt to the victims.

Khan has pleaded not guilty to the charges and sought a fresh trial, which Judge D. W. Deshpande granted Thursday. The judge said that all the witnesses would be re-examined.

The pretrial is set for Dec. 23.

"These are far more serious charges, so there should be a fair opportunity (for Khan) to defend himself," his lawyer, Shrikant Shivade, said.

Khan, one of Bollywood's most popular stars, has acted in about 90 Hindi-language films in his 25-year career. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Growing optimism. Whales stranded near coast move to deeper water

Pods of 35 pilot whales have been moving into deeper water off Florida's southwest coast, raising optimism that the strandings may soon end.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration fisheries official Blair Mase said Thursday the three pods were located 14 and a half kilometres north of their original location and moving offshore. They were in 3.6 metres of water at mid-afternoon.

Mase says anything can still happen, but officials think the whales have a chance to reach their normal deep-ocean range.

She also says 11 whales are dead and five are unaccounted for.

The large group of whales was first spotted Tuesday in very shallow water in Everglades National Park.

Those that died are being studied because they beached themselves. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

British Columbia

B.C. program shows doctors the money

A $100,000 cash incentive has attracted nine new doctors to take on jobs in rural B.C. It's part of a program developed by the provincial government and the British Columbia Medical Association to get physicians to work in remote areas in the province. The doctors will be serving in Terrace, Chetwynd, Bella Coola, Hazelton, Clearwater, Princeton, Nakusp and Port Hardy for three years. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Tuesday, December 24th, 7:00 p.m. — Carols and Candles: Family Christmas Eve
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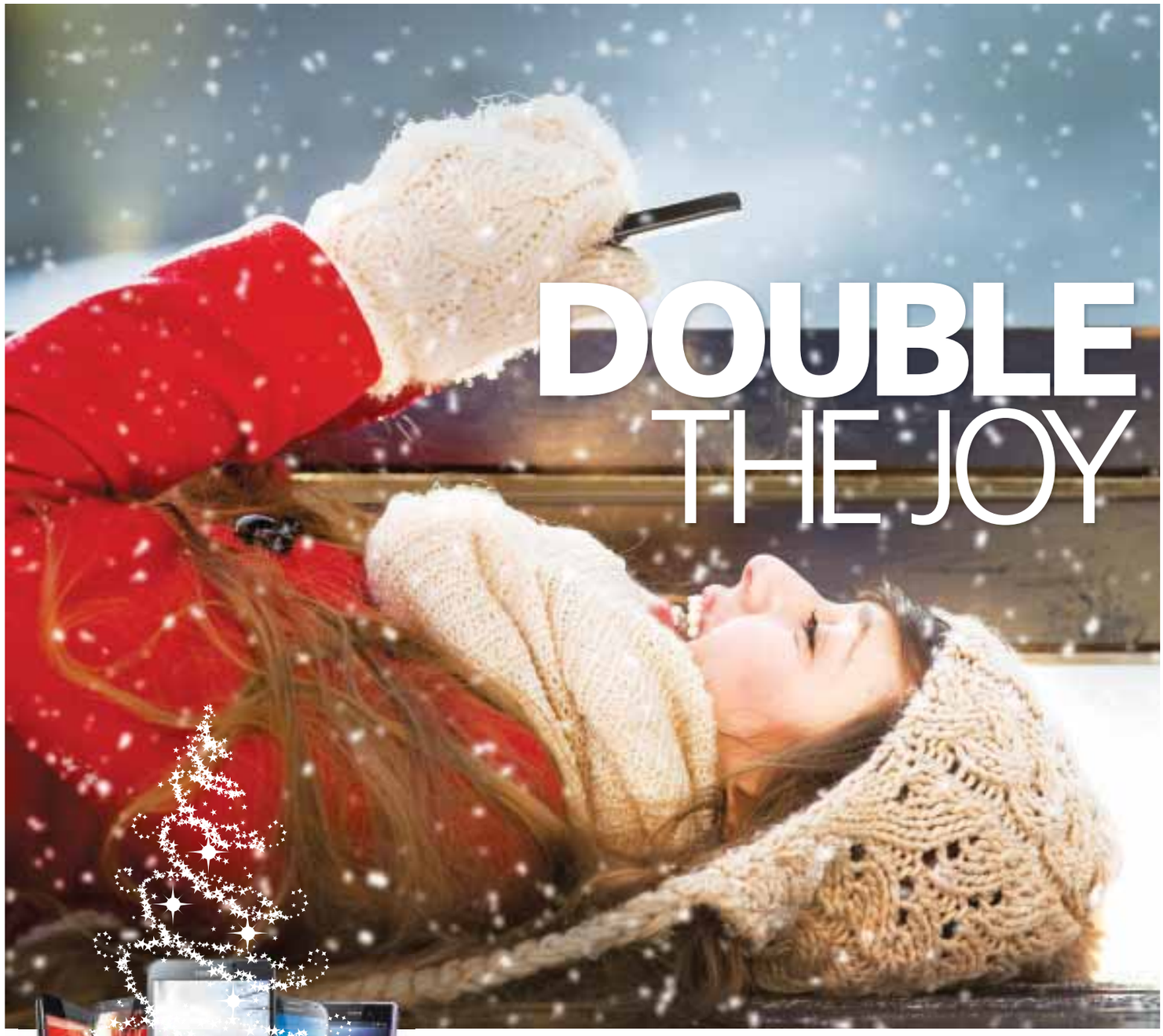

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Brother of dead soldier speaks out

A matter of life and death. Help with post-traumatic stress desperately needed for those in the military, Kevin McNeil says

The younger brother of a soldier whose death has raised questions about the Canadian military's treatment of those with post-traumatic stress disorder says members of the military need to know help is available if they are suffering.

Speaking before Warrant Officer Michael McNeil's funeral Thursday, Kevin McNeil said PTSD is a problem that is not going to stop, but the risks can be minimized.

"The most we can do is maybe slow it down," McNeil said outside the armoury in Truro, N.S.

"As much money as government is going to pour into this, it's not going to stop. What we can do is make more people aware, talk to these soldiers, let them know their jobs aren't in jeopardy and we're here for them."

McNeil's death at Canadian Forces Base Petawawa, northwest of Ottawa, is among four recent suicides in the military.

The Armed Forces acknowledges it will be dealing with an increased number of PTSD cases in the next decade as the stress of combat takes hold in those who have returned from the fighting in Afghanistan.

McNeil, 39, was a member 3rd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment.

McNeil said he wants his brother remembered as a family man first and secondly as a hero to his country.

McNeil's coffin was carried into the armoury by an honour guard made up of McNeil's comrades in the Royal Canadian Regiment, assisted by his brother Kevin and cousin Tim McNeil.

Quoted

"He gave everything to his country. He was a strong man and will be missed forever."

Kevin McNeil, brother of Warrant Officer Michael McNeil

During the funeral service, Lt. Kendra Mellish, the widow of Warrant Officer Frank Mellish, a soldier killed in Afghanistan in September 2006, gave a reflection on her friend.

She said after her husband died, McNeil helped care for her children and would meet her when he came back from tours.

"Only seven short years ago, he was in this same position, paying homage to his friend (Frank)," she said.

She offered comfort to McNeil's two daughters, one son and one stepson.

"Be proud of the hero he was," she said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Members of The Royal Canadian Regiment carry the casket at the funeral for Warrant Office Michael McNeil at the Truro Armouries in Truro, N.S. on Thursday. ANDREW VAUGHAN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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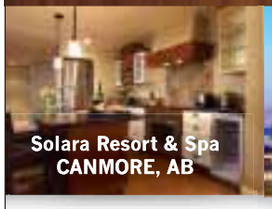
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Libya

American teacher killed in Benghazi

An American chemistry teacher was shot to death as he was jogging in Benghazi on Thursday, highlighting persistently tenuous security in the eastern Libyan city where a U.S. ambassador was killed last year.

There were no credible claims of responsibility, but suspicion was likely to fall on Islamic militants active in Benghazi. It came five days after al-Qaida's American spokesman called upon Libyans to attack U.S. interests everywhere as revenge for U.S. special forces snatching an al-Qaida suspect off the streets of Tripoli in October and whisking him out of the country.

The U.S. State Department identified the teacher as Ronald Thomas Smith II. The State Department did not provide Smith's hometown, and it was not possible to immediately confirm a statement from a Libyan official that he was from Texas. The University of Texas in Austin said he graduated from the school in 2006 with a master's degree in chemistry.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Syria

Iraqi journalist fatally shot at rebel checkpoint

Syrian opposition fighters killed an Iraqi freelance journalist in the rebel-held north of the country, the latest of dozens of reporters who have died in the country over the past three years, an activist group and an international media watchdog said Thursday.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Yasser Faisal al-Jumaili was shot dead at a rebel checkpoint in the northwestern province of Idlib on Wednesday.

Soazig Dollet of the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders press advocacy group confirmed al-Jumaili was killed in Idlib, adding that his body was taken to Turkey in order to be sent home later.

The Committee to Protect Journalists said that Syria was the most dangerous country in the world for journalists in 2012. According to the group, 28 reporters were killed in that year alone.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Egypt

Prominent Egyptian activists face trial for 'illegal' protests

Prosecutors on Thursday sent to trial two of the most prominent Egyptian activists involved in the 2011 uprising that brought down Hosni Mubarak, charging them with taking part in an "illegal" protest and allegedly assaulting policemen during demonstrations last month, judiciary officials said.

The officials said the two — Ahmed Douma and Ahmed Maher — will be in court on Sunday for the first hearing. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to journalists.

This is the first referral of activists to attend trial linked to the recently enacted protest or assembly law, which places draconian conditions on staging street demonstrations. The military-backed government has defended the law as a desperately needed measure to restore law and order in order to help the battered economy recover.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Use bitcoin at your own risk, warns China's central bank

'Virtual goods.'
Country bars banks from handling the cybercurrency

Bitcoins suffered a new setback after China's central bank said Thursday its banks and payment systems are barred from handling the virtual currency.

The central bank said bitcoins did not qualify as a currency but private individuals still are allowed to trade them at their own risk.

Bitcoins are created, distributed, and authenticated independently of any bank or government. Their relative anonymity holds out the promise of being able to spend money across the Internet without scrutiny.

A customer pays for drinks at a pub using bitcoins earlier this year in Sydney, Australia, using a QR code on a smartphone. GETTY IMAGES

"Bitcoins are virtual goods that have no legal status or monetary equivalent and should not be used as currency," said a Chinese central bank statement.

It said financial institutions and payment systems were not allowed to use bitcoin prices for products and could not sell, trade or store bitcoins.

"Ordinary people are free to participate in transactions at their own risk," the central bank said.

Despite wild swings in value, the virtual currency has been moving toward broader acceptance. A growing number of companies accept bitcoins, which can be converted into cash.

Other governments are wary of the cybercurrency. In July, Thailand's central bank banned trading and use of bitcoins.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fast-food workers not lovin' their McSalaries

Fast-food workers rally for better wages outside a McDonald's restaurant in Chicago, Thursday. Demonstrations planned in 100 U.S. cities are part of push by labour unions, worker advocacy groups and Democrats to raise the federal minimum wage of $7.25 US. Protesters are calling for pay of $15 US an hour, but the figure is seen more as a rallying point. The push for higher pay faces an uphill battle. The industry competes aggressively on value offerings and companies have warned they would need to raise prices if wages were hiked. Most fast-food locations are owned and operated by franchisees, which lets companies such as McDonald's Corp. and Burger King Worldwide Inc. say they don't control worker pay. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Baby steps

Twitter leans in, adds woman to board of directors

Twitter has named Marjorie Scardino as a director, adding a woman to the all-white male board for which it's been sharply criticized.

Scardino, 66, was the CEO of Pearson PLC, a publishing and education company, from 1997 to 2012, Twitter Inc. said in a filing. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

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Freedom fighter, world icon

Analysis. Why Nelson Mandela was important to South Africa and the world

ELISABETH BRAW
Metro World News

Nelson Mandela's cell of five square metres in Robben Island, where he spent 18 of his 27 years in prison, is now a virtual shrine for tourists and political figures alike. But Mandela was much more than a long-suffering prisoner. He was a world leader and a 20th century icon.

"His building a future for South Africa was a huge achievement," says Stephen Chan, professor of international relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and author of numerous books on southern Africa.

"He helped draft what may be the world's best constitution. He was instrumental in establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was crucial in helping the country deal with its apartheid past. He was also a highly moral politician, setting the tone for the whole continent by stepping down after one term."

Lilias van Wyk, a white South African who lived through apartheid, is full of admiration for Mandela.

"There's nobody like him here in South Africa. (Our former president and Mandela's deputy president Thabo Mbeki) was a gentleman, but our current president is more interested in ladies than anything else," she tells Metro.

Indeed, Mandela succeeded where so many other freedom-fighters-turned-leaders have failed: as a democratic politician and later president, the former communist united his country.

Despite the black majority's pent-up anger over decades of discrimination, no civil war erupted. The transition to democracy under Mandela's leadership proceeded in a remarkably peaceful and orderly fashion. In his presidential inauguration speech, Mandela urged South Africans to practise forgiveness, saying in Afrikaans, "Wat is verby verby," which translates to "What is past is past." And, through the power of his moral leadership, Mandela brought South Africa back into the international fold.

Quote

"We all think he was a fantastic man. It's amazing what he accomplished without any violence or shooting. And his dignity! I say, 'Thank you, Lord, that we've had him.'"

Lilias van Wyk, a white South African who lived through apartheid

But, Africa watchers note, Mandela was no angel, inherently speaking.

"He became a saint because we made him one," says Chan. "We made him one to justify not putting enough pressure on the apartheid government to release him."

And though South African lore sees him as an old man who magically emerged from decades in prison to govern his country with great success, the reality is a bit more nuanced. Explains Chan: "The four years between his release and his election as president in 1994 were turbulent. He had to go on a steep learning curve."

And, while Mandela was in charge as president, he mainly provided the strategic direction and left the nitty-gritty of governing to his deputy, Thabo Mbeki. That's in no way negative, but the frail 76-year-old didn't single-handedly perform the arduous task of running the country.

Even after stepping down, Mandela remained an icon at home and around the world: almost uniquely among dissidents elected to political power, he left with his integrity and popularity intact. For South Africa, the African continent, even the world he was a desperately needed icon of democratic success.

"We're all praying for a peaceful transition now," says van Wyk. "We're on our knees 24-7."

But the adoration of Mandela will no doubt continue.

South Africa's first black president, Nelson Mandela, revisits his prison cell on Robben Island, where he spent 18 of his 27 years in prison, in 1994.
GETTY IMAGES

SOURCES: BBC, NOBELPRIZE.ORG, PBS, SABC
CREATED: MIA KORAB, TEXT: ANTHONY JOHNSTON
5 THINGS WE'LL REMEMBER ABOUT MANDELA
1
FROM ROYALTY, LEGAL ACTIVISM TO "TERRORISM"
Nelson Mandela, raised by an African royal family in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa, studied law at university and opened the country's first black law firm at the age of 34. His zeal to fight apartheid led him to co-found an armed wing of the African National Congress, classified as a terrorist group at the time.
2
ROBBED OF LIBERTY, ON ROBBEN ISLAND
In 1964, Mandela was jailed for life for plotting to overthrow the government by sabotage. For 18 years of his sentence, he was interned at the infamous Robben Island prison in a tiny cell barely a few square metres in size. He was locked away, but not forgotten, as his power of resistance against apartheid spread from behind the bars to across the world.
3
MANDELA'S FREE AFTER MORE THAN A QUARTER OF A CENTURY
On February 11, 1990, clutching his wife Winnie's hand and dressed in a dignified brown suit, Mandela punches the air in a victory salute as he walks away from the gates of Victor Verster Prison. Mandela's freedom after 27 years in jail was one of the most iconic memories of the 20th century. Mandela was released following a relaxation of apartheid laws.
4
SOUTH AFRICA'S FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT ... AND OLDEST
In 1994, after more than 300 years of white rule, South Africa has its first black president after the country's first fully democratic election. At age 75, he became South Africa's oldest ever elected head of state.
5
BLACK AND WHITE UNITED, THROUGH SPORT
The following year, in another epic historic — and sporting — moment of the 20th century, Mandela presents the Rugby World Cup trophy to captain Francois Pienaar, an Afrikaner. Wearing a shirt of the South African rugby team (once reviled by the black population), Mandela's gesture was seen as a huge step of unity between blacks and whites.
1918-2013
1 visitor a year for 30 minutes was all Mandela was allowed to receive as a prisoner on Robben Island. He could write and receive one letter every half a year while interned there.
"If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner."
Mandela on dealing with his opponents. He was lauded worldwide for working with those authorities that once persecuted him, rather than remaining embittered.
DID YOU KNOW?
MASKED. Throughout his life, Mandela was often seen in public and respectfully cited Muslim, for many of his Khoisan-speaking friends and colleagues in prison.
MASTER OF DISGUISE. He earned the nickname "The Black Pimpernel" during his days with South African authorities, because of his work in avoiding the police and going underground and was a master of disguise.
KEEN CLASSICAL MUSIC FAN. In addition to his love of South African music, Mandela was known to enjoy classical music.
A TASTE FOR THE SIMPLE. Mandela's favourite dishes included protein-packed maize porridge with milk, and stew with vegetables and pap — that's the somewhat crumbly kind of polenta.
MANDELA THE "TERRORIST". For years, Mandela was flagged as a dangerous terrorist suspect due to his leadership in the armed wing of the African National Congress against the anti-apartheid regime, and served a prison term for conspiring to overthrow the government. It took until 2008, for Mandela to be removed from the terrorist list.

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SCENE 2

Synopsis

"Well, it's Christmas time, pretty baby" ... and the Reel Guys are watching films... With our apologies to Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, who wrote those lyrics to Elvis Presley's Santa Claus is Back in Town — that song pretty much sums up what the holiday season means for us. Next week we'll be back to reviewing the big releases of the year, but before we get to that we thought we'd have a look at movies to get us in the Christmas spirit. They may not all be on Santa's nice list.

Billy Bob Thornton's Bad Santa is an antidote to all that icky holiday cheer. CONTRIBUTED

Reel Guys

RICHARD CROUSE AND MARK BRESLIN

Santa's back in town

Festive features. The Reel Guys share their favourite holiday films, but not all of them bring comfort and joy

Richard: James Stewart stars in one of the movies that always puts me in the mood for Christmas, but its not the one you think. Sure, It's A Wonderful Life is a classic and yuletastic, but I also enjoy The Shop Around The Corner. It's a Christmassy romance that sees shop co-workers Stewart and Margaret Sullivan at one another's throats at work, unaware that they are also anonymously courting one another as pen pals. All becomes clear on Christmas Eve and they unwrap a big ol' gift basket of love. It's almost as heartwarming as a giant mug of hot chocolate.

Mark: Richard, as I'm Jewish, the Christmas holiday doesn't have quite the emotional pull on me that it might have on you. So, come Christmas Eve our family gathers around the TV, where we watch Bad Santa until we fall asleep from convulsive laughter. The story of an alcoholic, womanizing, foul-mouthed Santa is a delightful antidote to all that icky cheer I'm supposed to feel. Then, when the novelty dies down, I get with the program and watch Elf. But I wear my Grinch mask just in case a tear is shed.

RC: That green synthetic fur is great for soaking up tears! But an antidote to the icky cheer you describe are two films set during the holidays without an ounce of tinsel treacle between them. In The Long Kiss Goodnight an amnesiac played by Geena Davis is outed as a former hired killer when she is recognized playing Mrs. Claus in a Christmas parade. The title A Christmas Tale sounds traditional enough, but the story focuses on the bitter rather than the sweet. The English title of this Catherine Deneuve dramedy could easily have been Cancer for Christmas, but despite the downer topic it's complex, funny and touching.

MB: I've never seen A Christmas Tale, Richard, thanks for the tip. But if it's holiday downers we're looking for, consider Black Christmas, a 1974 slasher flick starring Olivia Hussey. I guess you could double-bill this one with the 2006 remake, but that might be, ahem, overkill.

RC: Many years ago, on the first Christmas the PMC — my Preferred Movie Companion — and I spent together, I screened Black Christmas for her, which almost stopped the relationship before it had a chance to really get going. I love the slaying slasher story. Her, not so much. I quickly rebounded with National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation, which made the yuletide bright once again. Thanks, Chevy Chase, for saving Christmas and my relationship!

MB: Well, for a Jewish guy like me, I'll just have to be content with Adam Sandler's Hanukkah animation classic, Eight Crazy Nights, and a glass of Manischewitz!

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Her named '13 best film by National Board of Review

Spike Jonze's futuristic romance Her has been named 2013's best film by the National Board of Review. The board also named Jonze best director, giving Her an early awards season boost. The Warner Bros. film starring Joaquin Phoenix and Scarlett Johansson is to be released December 18. Alexander Payne's father-son road trip Nebraska took two acting awards. Bruce Dern won for best actor, and his co-star Will Forte won for best supporting actor. Emma Thompson was awarded best actress for the Mary Poppins story Saving Mr. Banks. Best supporting actress went to Octavia Spencer for Fruitvale Station.
The National Board of Review is a group of film academics, students and professionals founded in 1909. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Crime/Drama

Out of the Furnace

Director. Scott Cooper

Stars. Christian Bale, Casey Affleck

This movie is bleaker than the most mournful George Jones song. When steel mill worker Russell Baze (Christian Bale) emerges from jail, he finds his live-in girlfriend (Zoe Saldana) no longer lives in and his Iraq War vet brother Rodney (Casey Affleck) is having trouble with civilian life. When Rodney disappears after a bare-knuckle fight run by Harlan DeGroat (Woody Harrelson) Russell attempts vigilante justice. Bale and Affleck hand in intense performances but Harrelson shines as the scuzzball. **RICHARD CROUSE**

THESE PAGES COVER MOVIE START TIMES FROM FRI., DEC. 6 TO THURS., DEC. 12 TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Broadway Theatre
715 Broadway Ave.

Girl Rising (STC) Mon 7
No Films Showing Today (STC) Fri-Sun Wed-Thu

Valhalla (STC) Tue 7

Cineplex Odeon Centre
3510 8th St. East

12 Years a Slave (14A) Fri-Sun 9:55 Mon-Tue 8 Wed 1:10-8 Thu 8
Ender's Game (PG) Fri 6:45-9:45 Sat-Sun 12:50-3:40-6:45-9:45 Mon-Tue 5:25-8:05 Wed 1:30-5:25-8:05 Thu 5:25-8:05
Free Birds (G) Fri 7:50 Sat-Sun 1-3:15-5:30-7:50 Mon 5:20 Tue-Thu 5:55
Frozen (G) Sat-Sun 11:50
Frozen 3D (G) Fri 7:40-10:15 Sat-Sun 2:25-5:05-7:40-10:15 Mon-Tue 5:40-8:15 Wed 1:40-5:40-8:15 Thu 5:40-8:15
The Hunger Games: Catching Fire (PG) Fri 7-10:05 Sat-Sun 12:30-3:45-7-10:05 Mon-Thu 5:20-8:30 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1
Last Vegas (PG) Fri 7:55-10:20 Sat-Sun 12:25-2:55-5:25-7:55-10:20 Mon 5:30 Tue 5:50-8:35 Wed 1:15-5:50-8:35 Thu 5:50-8:35
Philomena (PG) Fri 7:35-10 Sat-Sun 12:45-3-5:15-7:35-10 Mon-Thu 6:05-8:40 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1
Puella Magi Madoka Magica the Movie: Rebellion (STC) Mon 7:30
Thor: The Dark World (PG) Sat-Sun 1:10 Wed 1:25
Thor: The Dark World 3D (PG) Fri 6:50-9:40 Sat-Sun 3:55-6:50-9:40 Mon-Thu 5:35-8:20

Galaxy Cinemas Saskatoon
347 2nd Ave. South

The Book Thief (PG) Fri 6:45-9:40 Sat 12:20-3:20-6:45-9:40 Sun 12:20-3:20-6:40-9:40 Mon-Wed 6:40-9:40 Thu 6:40
Dallas Buyers Club (14A) Fri 4:25-7:10-9:55 Sat 1:45-4:25-7:10-9:55 Sun 1:45-4:25-7:05-9:55 Mon-Thu 7:05-9:55
Delivery Man (PG) Fri 5:20-8-10:30 Sat 11:30-2:20-5:20-8-10:30 Sun 2:20-5:20-8-10:30 Mon-Thu 8-10:30
Frozen (G) Fri 4:10-6:50 Sat 11-1:35-4:10-6:50 Sun 1:35-4:10-6:50 Mon-Thu 6:50
Frozen 3D (G) Fri 5:15-7:50-10:25 Sat 12-2:35-5:15-7:50-10:25 Sun 12-2:35-5:15-7:50-10:20 Mon-Thu 7:50-10:20
Gravity 3D (PG) Fri 5:50-8:10-10:35 Sat 1:10-3:30-5:50-8:10-10:35 Sun 1:20-4:20-7-9:45 Mon-Wed 7-9:45 Thu 9:45
The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug 3D (STC) No Passes Thu 10 No Passes Thu 10:30
Holiday Inn (STC) Sun 12:45
Homefront (14A) Fri 5-7:40-10:10 Sat 11:15-2:30-5-7:40-10:10 Sun 12:05-2:30-5-7:35-10:10 Mon-Thu 7:35-10:10
The Hunger Games: Catching Fire (PG) Fri 7-9:45-10:15 Sat 12:30-3:45-7-9:45-10:15 Sun 12:15-3:30-6:45-9:30-10 Mon-Wed 6:45-9:30-10 Thu 7:15-10-10:30 Fri 4:15-7:30-10:45 Sat 1-4:15-7:30-10:45 Sun 12:45-4-7:15-10:30 Mon-Wed 7:15-10:30 Thu 6:45
Jackass Presents: Bad Grandpa (14A) Fri 6-8:20-10:40 Sat 1:05-3:40-6-8:20-10:40 Sun 5:25-7:40-10:15 Mon-Tue 7:40-10:15 Wed 10:15 Thu 7:40
Out of the Furnace (14A) Fri 4:40-7:20-10 Sat 11:10-2-4:40-7:20-10 Sun 2-4:40-7:20-10:05 Mon-Thu 7:20-10:05
The Polar Express (G) Sat 11
Royal Opera: The Nutcracker - Encore (STC) Thu 7:30
Thor: The Dark World (PG) Sat 2:10 Sun 1:25
Thor: The Dark World 3D (PG) Fri-Sat 5:10-7:55-10:50 Sun 4:35-7:25-10:25 Mon-Thu 7:25-10:25 Sat 11:15

Roxy Theatre
320 20th St West

About Time (PG) Sat 3 Sun-Thu 9
All Is Lost (G) Fri 6:50 Sat-Sun 1-6:50 Mon-Thu 6:50
The Human Scale (STC) Sat 1:10-7 Sun 1:10 Mon-Thu 7
Kill Your Darlings (14A) Fri 9:20 Sat-Sun 3:20-9:20 Mon-Thu 9:20

Rainbow Cinemas Saskatoon
The Centre at Circle & 8th

Captain Phillips (PG) Fri-Thu 1-3:55-6:50-9:45
Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs 2 (G) Fri-Wed 1:40-4-7-9:25 Thu 4-7-9:25 Thu 1
Despicable Me 2 (G) Fri-Thu 2-4:30-7:20-9:50
Enough Said (PG) Fri-Thu 2:20-4:40-7:15-9:35
Escape Plan (14A) Fri-Thu 2:15-4:50-7:25-10
Lee Daniels' The Butler (PG) Fri-Thu 1:15-4:05-6:55-9:40
Planes (G) Fri-Thu 1:10-4:55
Prisoners (14A) Fri-Thu 7:45
We're the Millers (14A) Fri-Thu 1:30-4:20-7:10-9:55

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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Cynthia Nixon ALL IMAGES GETTY

Charlotte will try to twist Miranda's arm to complete Sex and the City trilogy

While Cynthia Nixon may have shot down the idea of a third Sex and the City film, co-star Kristin Davis is still holding out hope. "I'm going to have a little talk with Cynthia the next time I see her," Davis tells Haute Living magazine. "I don't think (a third film) is a pipe dream. There is a discussion. People talk about it amongst the people who are the players, but I don't know if it will come together. It would be very exciting if it did."

Amanda Bynes

Free woman Bynes 'feeling better every day'

Amanda Bynes is a free woman once more. The troubled actress has completed her in-patient treatment and is at her family's home for the holidays, according to People magazine. "She's feeling better every day," her mother's attorney, Tamar Arminak, tells the magazine. "Despite the fact Amanda is no longer in a facility, her outpatient treatment is continuing. She's very happy to reestablish the loving relationship with her family that she once shared." Bynes' next court date is set for Jan. 7.

The Word

Paltrow's festive Kors collection too rich for most people's blood

TINA CHADHA
Metro World News

Last month,we found out that Gwyneth Paltrow and Michael Kors would create a special holiday collection for Goop, Paltrow's lifestyle site. Well, that day has come, people. The line — which consists of some of the Oscar-winner's favourite Kors pieces, but updated — debuts on the site Thursday and includes a high-end suede tote, an oversized gold watch, leather smoking slippers, a cashmere cape, a grey structured peplum sweater and a military-inspired wool coat. But like the clothes you imagine Gwynnie creating her organic meals in, these threads veer on the luxe side. The items range in price from $145 for a bracelet to $2,595 for the cosy cape. Something a bit more universal: Kors' grandmother's recipe for easy-to-make butter cookies.

Britney Spears

Hey critics! Don't you dare burst Britney's bubble

The reviews for Britney Spears' new album, Britney Jean, have been pretty terrible — but Spears herself has no idea. "Britney's manager, Larry Rudolph, and her father, Jamie, won't allow her to see any of the bad reviews," a source tells Radar Online. "Britney doesn't even have access to the Internet and lives in a bubble. Her team will allow her to believe that the album is being well-received. No one wants to upset Britney. If she were to read anything negative, it could send her into a bad tailspin, and both Larry and Jamie know that can't happen with her upcoming shows in Vegas about to launch."

Twitter

@kirstiealley
oh lord how I love to make people laugh ..and vice versa ! We all need somethin to make us float off to happy land..and Sitcom is Drug free

@DanaDelany
Just opened a jar of honey vintage 1996. Did you know it's the only food that doesn't spoil? Besides Twinkies, of course.

@JasonAlexander
My kid kneed me in the nuts 2nite. It was in the guise of a self defense demo but I frankly think he just flat out kneed me in the nuts.

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ANIMAL SERVICES

Liquid Assets

Liqueur in the spotlight

LIQUID ASSETS
Peter Rockwell
@therealwineguy
liquidassets@eastlink.ca

The term liqueur covers a lot of ground — from decadent, cream-based combinations, all the way to secret blends of herbs and spices. Most have a life outside of the holiday season, but I bet that for the majority of you buying a bottle in December is your yearly liqueur fix.

There's something sad about that. The liqueur market has never been more vibrant, venturing into packaging and flavour innovation territory any other booze category would fear to tread.

Not that the old standbys are resting on their liquid laurels. Bailey's (the Irish king of Christmas drinking) has introduced new flavoured family members and even Grand Marnier has dipped its cap in the pool of fruity expression, creating a special series of alternative versions.

Never to be outdone, Mexico's Kahlúa Limited Edition Gingerbread Liqueur (375 ml, $15.49 - $16.99) starts with the classic mix of rum and Arabica coffee and then adds gingerbread, nutmeg, cinnamon and clove. It results in a seasonal treat that's great over ice or as fuel in your favourite cup of joe. **PRICES REFLECT THE RANGE ACROSS THE COUNTRY. SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE IN ALL PROVINCES.**

Gingerbread graduates to a grown-up torte

Almond-Chocolate Gingerbread Torte. This decadent treat features the quintessential holiday flavour with chocolate and almonds

This recipe serves 12. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ingredients

Chocolate Ganache Glaze
- 90 ml (6 tbsp) whipping cream
- 22 ml (1 1/2 tbsp) light corn syrup
- 250 ml (1 cup) semi-sweet chocolate chips

Cake
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) butter, softened
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) sugar
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) molasses
- 2 eggs
- 5 ml (1 tsp) vanilla
- 300 ml (1 1/4 cups) all-purpose flour
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) unsweetened cocoa powder
- 10 ml (2 tsp) ground ginger
- 7 ml (1 1/2 tsp) cinnamon
- 5 ml (1 tsp) baking powder
- 2 ml (1/2 tsp) allspice
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) buttermilk
- 150 ml (2/3 cup) toasted slivered almonds, divided
- Chocolate Ganache Glaze
- 75 to 125 ml (1/3 to 1/2 cup) apricot or peach preserves

1. Heat oven to 180 C (350 F). Coat two 23-cm (9-inch) round layer cake pans with vegetable spray.

2. In a mixer bowl, beat butter until fluffy. Beat in sugar, then molasses to blend thoroughly. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Beat in vanilla.

3. In another bowl, sift dry ingredients together. Beat into butter mixture just to blend. Mix in buttermilk. Coarsely chop 75 ml (1/3 cup) of the almonds; mix into batter. Pour into prepared pans, dividing equally and smoothing tops. Bake in centre of oven for about 15 minutes, just until springy to the touch. Let cool in pans on racks for 5 minutes, then turn out onto racks to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, prepare glaze. In a small saucepan over medium heat, bring whipping cream and corn syrup to a boil. Remove from heat and mix in chocolate chips until smooth. Let cool until mixture is thick enough to spread on cake. Set aside.

5. Place one cake layer on a serving plate; cover with preserves and drizzle with glaze. Top with remaining cake layer. Spread glaze evenly over top and sides of torte. Garnish with remaining almonds. Let glaze set for at least 1 hour before serving. **THE CANADIAN PRESS/ ALMOND BOARD OF CALIFORNIA**

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MIKE YAWNEY
For Metro

Don't just buy the bookworm on your list another paperback. Think outside the box and get them some tech they can use to enhance their reading experiences.

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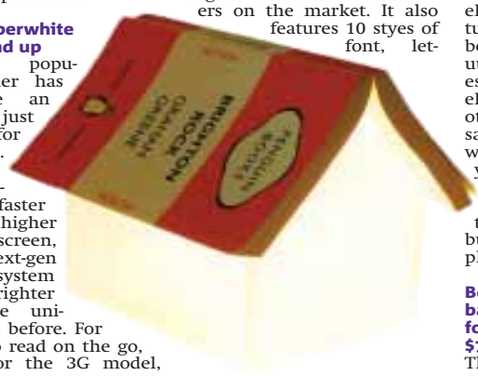
Amazon's popular eReader has undergone an upgrade, just in time for Christmas. The latest model features a faster processor, higher contrast screen, and a next-gen lighting system that is brighter and more uniform than before. For those who read on the go, splurge for the 3G model, which lets you download books without Wi-Fi and no monthly fees.



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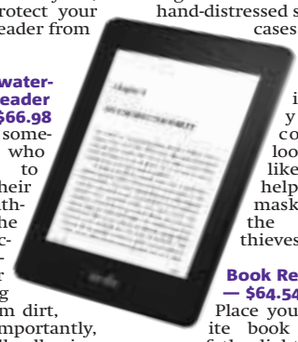

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Pick a Christmas tree that makes the cut

Choices. Firs have taken over from pine trees when it comes to real trees in the home

MICHELLE WILLIAMS
For Metro

All Christmas trees are beautiful — even Charlie Brown's scrawny little twig was a winner once it was all jacked up with decorations.

But if you are a bit fussier, here is a list of some of the most popular trees with the help of Arthur Loewen, president of the Canadian Christmas Tree Growers Association.

At one time, the pine tree was the No. 1 holiday tree, but this wide, heavy, long-needled tree has been replaced in popularity by the fir, a lighter, thinner, short-needled tree grown in many varieties across the country.

Native to Canada's East Coast, the Balsam fir is a nice-looking, hardy tree that sells for a relatively good price.

"It keeps moderately well, has rigid stems that don't sag when you hang decorations, and it has a thin trunk, which makes it easier to handle and put into a stand," Loewen said.

Gaining in popularity is the Fraser fir, also found primarily in Eastern Canada, but also in the west. It's pricier for a few reasons.

"It's the best needle keeper when you bring it inside," Loewen said. "It's lightweight, narrow, has the most rigid branches, and tends to last longer than the Balsam.

But the big reason for the extra cost is that there is more work in raising a Fraser fir to harvest. They take longer to grow than other firs, they grow best in dry areas and are more prone to disease and insects.

In the West, the Douglas fir tops the list.

"It matures quickly, so it's not as expensive to grow," Loewen said.

However, it doesn't last as long and the branches do sag a bit more than the more expensive Noble fir, also native to the West.

"The Noble fir is much like the Fraser, except it has a bluish colour," Loewen said.

Priced like the Fraser, this "king of the Christmas trees" grows slowly but does well as a holiday tree.

Christmas Tree Day

The Canadian Christmas Tree Growers Association has declared Dec. 7 as National Christmas Tree Day.

- Canada harvests approximately 2.5 millions trees annually
- More than 34,600 hectares (76,700 acres) were used for growing Christmas trees in Canada in 2011.
- There were 2,381 Christmas tree plantations in Canada in 2001.
- Each hectare produces enough oxygen for 40 people.
- For more, visit canadianchristmastrees.ca.

Real Christmas trees can help enhance the holiday experience. PRESSMASTER/SHUTTERSTOCK

Glitz and glamour

Foxy Originals Downtown Deco Empire Necklace, $52, available at Foxyoriginals.com.

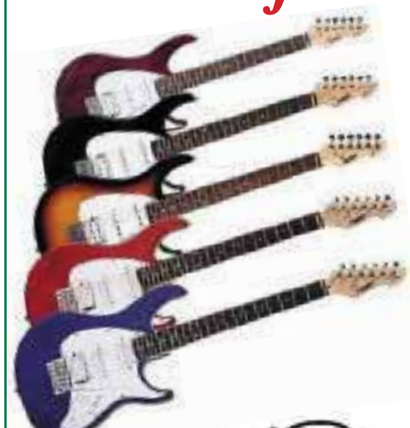
Banana Republic Turqoise Statement Necklace, $134, available at Banana Republic, bananarepublic.ca.

Tiffany sterling silver Atlas Lariat, $275, available at Tiffany, tiffany.ca.

Swarovski Knot Ring, $120, available at Swarovski, swarovski.ca.

Believe crystal bracelets with grosgrain ribbon, $105 each, available at Mika Designs, 514-748-5630.

Looking for a unique gift idea?
Take a Guitar Home for Christmas!



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GUITAR SPECIALS

MODEL	REGULAR	SPECIAL
BC-RICH ASM1 Pearl BLK	$310	$260
BC-RICH Warlock Bronze	$300	$250
BC-RICH Warlock Pack	$470	$370
SIGMA 000M15-Orchest Body	$475	$375
SIGMA 000MC-1STE Orchest	$559	$459
SIGMA DR-1ST Dreadnought	$375	$325
EASTWOOD Airline Twin Tone	$649	$549
EASTWOOD Airline 2P DLX	$949	$675
EASTWOOD Hi-Flyer (White)	$625	$525
PEAVEY Raptor Stage Pack	$430	$200
WALDEN Acoustic (+tuner & bag)	$290	$200

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The Leafs celebrate Trevor Smith's overtime goal against the Stars on Thursday night in Toronto. RICK MADONIK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

No collapse vs. Stars leaves Leafs relieved

NHL. Overtime win ends Toronto's five-game losing streak

The Toronto Maple Leafs didn't make it easy on themselves, but their losing streak is over.

Again they were badly outshot and a late penalty almost did them in, but Trevor Smith scored in overtime as Toronto beat the Dallas Stars 3-2 Thursday night in Toronto to end the skid at five games.

Relief was the primary emotion after giving up 50 shots and winning for the first time since Nov. 23.

On Thursday

Leafs	Stars
3	2

"I'm happy we won because there seems to be a lot of pressure on our group, and hopefully this helps flush some of the things that are going on out there that we can feel a little bit of room to breathe what we went through," coach Randy Carlyle said. "By no means that we think we're out of the woods, but it feels good to win a hockey game."

The Leafs (15-11-3) won in large part because goaltender Jonathan Bernier made 48 saves, including six in overtime before Smith beat Kari Lehtonen with 42 seconds to go before a shootout. Bernier conceded he was tired.

All in a day's work for a Leafs goaltender given that this was the 10th consecutive game they were outshot. Bernier called being outshot — this time 44-22 in regulation and 50-24 total — this team's "style." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Elsewhere Thursday

- **Lightning 3, Senators 2.** Martin St. Louis scored two goals and Ben Bishop won his 15th game this season in Tampa Bay's win over Ottawa.
- **Canadiens 2, Bruins 1.** Max Pacioretty netted the winner as the Habs topped the rival Bruins.
- **Panthers 5, Jets 2.** Dylan Olsen scored his first NHL goal to help Florida beat Winnipeg.

Getzlaf, LaBatte, Picard, Bagg sign on to stay in Saskatchewan

Regina's Chris Getzlaf
GETTY IMAGES

Receivers Chris Getzlaf and Rob Bagg and offensive linemen Brendon LaBatte and Dominic Picard all signed contract extensions to remain with the Grey Cup champion Saskatchewan Roughriders.

Getzlaf, Bagg and Picard are under contract to the CFL club through the 2015 season while LaBatte's deal covers the 2016 campaign.

Getzlaf, 30, a Regina native, has played his entire seven-year CFL career with the Riders. Getzlaf had 63 catches for 1,045 yards and seven TDs during the regular season before adding three receptions for 78 yards in being named the top Canadian in Saskatchewan's 45-23 Grey Cup win over Hamilton.

Bagg, 28, of Kingston, Ont., completed his sixth season with Saskatchewan, registering 34 catches for 430 yards and four TDs. Bagg enters the 2014 campaign with 168 career receptions for 2,365 yards and 12 touchdowns.

LaBatte, of Weyburn, Sask., was the CFL's top lineman this year as well as a league all-star. The former University of Regina star was selected in the first round, sixth overall, by Winnipeg in the 2008 CFL draft.

Picard, 31, of Ste-Foy, Que., joined the Riders as a free agent following the 2012 season. He started all 18 regular-season games and the club's three post-season contests. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ottawa

RedBlacks to name Campbell head coach

The Ottawa RedBlacks have found their man.

According to a CFL source requesting anonymity, the RedBlacks have chosen Calgary Stampeders defensive co-ordinator Rick Campbell as their first head coach. They're expected to make it official Friday morning at a news conference. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Toronto

Burke joins Argos as defensive co-ordinator

The Toronto Argonauts hired Tim Burke as their new defensive co-ordinator.

Burke replaces Chris Jones, who last month was named head coach of the Edmonton Eskimos.

Burke served as head coach of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers from August 2012 through the 2013 season before being relieved of those duties. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Roar of the Rings

Homan awaits opponent for semi

Defending Canadian champion Jennifer Homan defeated Stefanie Lawton of Saskatoon 6-5 in the final game of the seven-game round robin to finish 4-3 and qualify for the semifinal at the Olympic curling trials in Winnipeg.

Winnipeg's Chelsea Carey and Ontario's Sherry Middaugh face off Friday for the right to face Homan. Winnipeg's Jennifer Jones awaits the winner in Saturday's final. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Men's draw

Jacobs a cut above at MTS Centre

Reigning Canadian champion Brad Jacobs beat Kevin Martin 5-4 on Thursday to clinch a spot in Sunday's final of the Canadian Olympic curling trials.

The battle of the best took Jacobs' record to 6-0, but Martin goes to 5-1 and earns a berth into Saturday afternoon's semifinal. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
You may be a nice guy but most likely you will refuse to come to the rescue of someone who is in distress today. It may seem heartless but it's the only way they are going to learn.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Too often you have held back while those with considerably less talent have achieved the kind of success that should have been yours. Shed your inhibitions and let the world see what a star you are.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
You may be under pressure to apologize for something you said to a friend or colleague but is that wise? Not if you truly meant it. Besides, why give them the impression that you can be easily swayed?

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
You may be behind in your schedule but don't worry about it. If anything, you should be aiming to conserve your energy now — if only because by the early part of next week you will be working harder than ever.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
There are only so many hours in a day, so identify your priorities and don't try to do everything at once. Aim for quality rather than quantity in all things at all times. One way or another, it will be enough.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You have reason to be annoyed with someone but because you are an agreeable individual, you may allow them to wriggle out of it by saying the right words. That'd be a mistake.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
It's not like you to look back and wish things had been different but that may be your attitude today. OK, so you could have done a lot of things differently and some things better but that's life.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Everything is going according to plan and even though you may not get all the things you desire today, you will certainly get all the things you need. The cosmos, as always, are looking over and looking after you.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You may not be the best in certain areas but in one field of endeavor you have no equals and that is what you should be focusing on now. Don't try to be all things to all men.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Close your ears to criticism and don't waste time trying to get even with those who have let you down or said hurtful things. Time is too precious to waste on petty people .

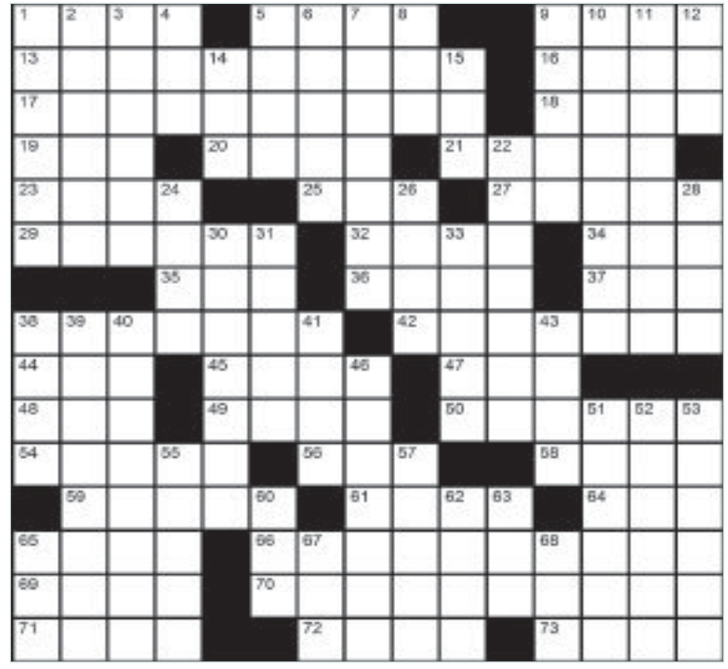
♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
There is no point complaining about a certain person's behaviour when what they are doing now is what they did yesterday and the day before that. It's in their nature, so either accept it or move away from their influence.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You need more fun in your life but you won't get it doing the same old things with the same old people. The planets are urging you to be more adventurous. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

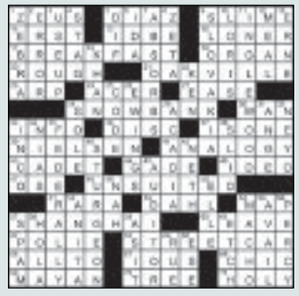
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Abodes-in-buildings, e.g.
5. Labels
9. Biblical boats
13. E! Canada host who previously hosted "So You Think You Can Dance Canada": 2 wds.
16. Bulk containers
17. London, ON's nickname: 2 wds.
18. Meat cut
19. Univ. paper
20. Incite
21. Be an active volcano
23. Old music high notes
25. Pick-up-sticks game
27. "__ There Yet?" (2005): 2 wds.
29. Teeth-related
32. Head's holder
34. Headed
35. "Bravo!"
36. Ex-VP Al
37. Papua New Guinea seaport
38. "The Daily Show" host Jon
42. London, ON university
44. Legume
45. Lady Gaga song
47. Lady's man
48. Computer key
49. Actress Ms. Cannon
50. Does canine work
54. __ beaucoup!
56. Veggie of Japan
58. Venus de __ (Ancient statue)
59. Lost & __
61. Waning waves
64. "Platoon" (1986) war, for short
65. Designer, Christian __ (b.1905 - d.1957)
66. PM Harper's hockey book: 3 wds.
69. Prefix meaning 'High'
70. Canadian actress who starred in 1933's "42nd Street": 2 wds.
71. "__, __ have you decided yet?" (Er, like, did you make up your mind?)
72. Wall St. landmark, commonly
73. Fewer

Down
1. Bruce Wayne's butler
2. Celebrity magazine
3. Scottish pattern
4. "__-Devil" (1989)
5. Musician Mr. Puente
6. Rio Tinto __ (Aluminum company based in Montreal)
7. Soaring
8. Band's performance
9. "It's all _ __." (Foggy memory comment)
10. Canadian painter, Jean Paul __ (b.1923 - d.2002)
11. Sweaters and scarves
12. US tax ID
14. Food additive
15. Deli bread
22. Makes much money: 2 wds.
24. Pack
26. Cat call
28. Apple/snake lieu
30. 1992 Disney animated flick
31. "Madame Curie" (1943) director, Mervyn __
33. Salad green
38. Internet junk
39. Cinematic federal agency, __ Canada
40. Have carrots or potatoes, basically: 2 wds.
41. "Heart and Soul" '80s group
43. Hair salon task
46. BC city in the northern Okanagan
51. Conclusion
52. Scotiabank Saddledome team
53. Actress/entrepreneur Suzanne
55. Oddity
57. Does as instructed
60. __ es Salaam, Tanzania
62. Create cupcakes
63. Fr. holy woman
65. Brother's sis, to Mom [abbr.]
67. Son-of-a-__
68. Collective Soul song

Yesterday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

	4			6		9		1
			5		4		3	2
	7	3			5		8	
			2		6			
	8		1			4	9	
9	2		7		1			
8		6		9			7	3

Yesterday's Sudoku

9	1	4	7	3	6	8	2	5
2	5	6	1	8	4	3	7	9
3	8	7	9	2	5	1	6	4
6	4	9	3	7	1	5	8	2
5	7	8	2	4	9	6	3	1
1	3	2	5	6	8	9	4	7
8	6	5	4	9	7	2	1	3
7	2	1	6	5	3	4	9	8
4	9	3	8	1	2	7	5	6

Today
-22°/-30°
Partly sunny
Saturday
-21°/-25°
Partly cloudy
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Check the 14 day trend.
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